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Plastic Industry Focus of 2007 Enforcement Initiative

Manufacturers and Transporters Violating Clean Water Statutes Subject to \$10,000 Fines, Criminal Prosecution

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Plastic manufacturers and transporters throughout the Los Angeles Basin are the focus of a new enforcement initiative being conducted by the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board. The initiative seeks to stop plastic pellets from entering area storm drains, rivers, bays and the Pacific Ocean. The initiative, which was launched in January 2007, includes:

- Developing a comprehensive list of area businesses manufacturing, transporting and using resin pellets, the raw material used to produce plastic products. This list is being compiled from several sources, including business licenses, environmental permits and chamber and association databases.
- Advising businesses of water quality permit, monitoring and reporting requirements. Assisting businesses with obtaining requisite permits will be a key next step.
- Conducting unannounced inspections of businesses to determine if existing handling and housekeeping practices are sufficient to prevent pellets from leaving the site and reaching local waterbodies.
- Notifying business owners of any violation of clean water regulations. The notification describes the violation and specifies when compliance must be achieved and the penalties for failing to achieve compliance.
- As required, assessing fines and/or referring business owners to the California Attorney General for prosecution. State law permits the Regional Board to impose fines up to \$10,000 per violation per day and the State Attorney General to pursue civil or criminal sanctions.

“When managed appropriately, resin pellets are not a threat to water quality or aquatic life,” said Francine Diamond, Chair of the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board. “However, when allowed to enter our storm drain system and waterways they become very problematic. They blight our world-famous beaches and, in turn, endanger our coastal economy. When consumed by fish and birds, the

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pellets stay in their digestive systems and cause them to die slowly from starvation. For these reasons, the Regional Board has made zero pellet loss an enforcement priority.”

The California Film Extruders and Converters Association, the American Chemistry Council, and the Society of the Plastics Industry support the Regional Board’s enforcement initiative. “Pellet loss is a critical issue for the plastics industry,” said Cathy Browne of Crown Poly and Chair of the inter-plastic industry group working with the Board. “Maintaining good housekeeping practices and keeping pellets contained is easy and inexpensive, especially when compared to the substantial fines for allowing resin pellets to pollute our waterways and ocean.”

“Environmental protection and product stewardship are key operating principles for the plastics industry,” noted Pete Dinger of the Plastics Division of the American Chemistry Council. “It is in everyone’s best interest to make zero pellet loss a reality.”

To assist plastic manufacturers and transporters with meeting environmental laws, the American Chemistry Council and the Society of the Plastics Industry, in conjunction with the California Film Extruders, launched Operation Clean Sweep in 2005. This program provides free information on effective and economical housekeeping and pellet containment practices. “Operation Clean Sweep has, without significant additional cost, helped give us the direction and tools to improve our overall plant cleanliness,” said Peter Grande, President of Command Packaging and the state film and bag association. “It has also increased awareness among all of our employees that each of us is able to protect the environment. As a business owner in an overly-regulated state, I welcome the opportunity to become part of the solution while at the same time helping to avoid any further government regulations or penalties.”

"SPI's collaboration with our fellow trade associations, regulators and environmentalists on Operation Clean Sweep and efforts to contain plastic pellets dates back several years," said SPI President and CEO William R. Cardeaux. "This work exemplifies the plastics industry's spirit of cooperation and its resolve to continue building positive and progressive relationships with all entities concerned about the environment."

To learn more about Operation Clean Sweep and to receive the manual on how to reduce the loss of resin pellets to the environment, visit its web site: www.opcleansweep.org

The Los Angeles Water Board is one of nine regional boards in the State. Among its principal duties, the Board sets region-wide water quality standards and waste discharge requirements, enforces both federal and state clean water statutes, regulates cleanup of sites which pose an immediate or potential threat to water quality and educates the public on water quality issues. The Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board is comprised of nine individuals, each of whom is appointed by the Governor, and a small professional staff, comprised mostly of scientists, engineers and geologists. To learn more about the Regional Board, visit its web site: www.waterboards.ca.gov/losangeles/

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